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The Economic Journal

MR. CHARLES BOOTH ON THE AGED POOR.¹

It is hardly possible for any reader to judge of the correctness or sufficiency of the large mass of statistical statements which Mr. C. Booth's book contains, unless he has himself travelled over the ground that it covers, or reanalysed to some extent the data upon which its propositions are founded. These statements are ranged in sections—'general conclusions,' 'individual comparisons,' 'reports on the condition of the old,' and 'old age in villages'; and there are besides statistical and other appendices. We would proceed from particulars to generals, and would suggest to the reader that he turn first to the pages headed 'old age in villages.' If he read that section, and note the cases and descriptions, and perhaps skip the statistics, he will have, we think, a fair conception of the condition of the aged poor in the country. The picture is not a politician's. It is not alarming or sensational, but it shows clearly the large play of personal motives and friendly and family feelings that make up the reality of most of our lives, and are in a sense important economic factors. If he pass next to the reports, or rather notes, on the condition of the aged, there too he will find good gleanings. They have been written by many hands, some with shrewdness, some—by comparison only a very few—in a rather sentimental vein. Taken as a whole, they show very naturally and simply many of the real difficulties of social progress: want of foresight and thrift, neglect of family ties, the shiftings and depression of trade; and, on the other hand, we see the good results of better wages, low prices, allotments, and the improved housing of the poor. As a rule outdoor relief often appears to be obtained with comparative ease, and is not accepted with any feeling of degradation. Sometimes its reduction is accounted a hardship: often

¹ *The Aged Poor in England and Wales*, by Charles Booth. London: Macmillan and Co., 1894.

complaint is made of its inadequacy. On the whole, the notes, like the accounts of old age in villages, chronicle a 'marked,' or 'gradual improvement.'

When we turn to the 'Individual Comparisons' between union and union, we become more critical. Here and elsewhere in the book we have to test—(1) The evidence on which the statistical conclusions are based; (2) the methods by which they are calculated; and (3) the conclusions which are deduced from them.

I.

First, of the evidence. It is based on uncertain statistics of age. It rests upon a year count, which is less suitable for statistical purposes in this matter than a day count. It is, at least in regard to the Metropolis as a whole, incorrect. It does not bring before the reader exceptional circumstances which materially affect the conclusions in individual unions.

The book is an elaboration of what is known as Mr. Ritchie's return, with a collation of figures in regard to density of population and overcrowding. This return gives the number of *paupers* (persons, not applications) in England and Wales on the 1st of January 1892, and in the year 1891-2. Lunatics and vagrants are excluded, except those in receipt of indoor relief. These make a number of 23,812 on the 1st of January 1892—17,119 lunatics and 6,693 vagrants, and should be mentally excluded by the reader. The paupers are classified by age; up to 16; 16-65; 65 and upwards. The inclusion of the lunatics and vagrants does not much affect the numeration of the aged. Probably only a little more than 1 per cent. of the lunatics, and, judging from counts made at Manchester, not more than 6 per cent. of the vagrants would be more than sixty-five years old. The unions are classified by Mr. Booth from this return according to their geographical position and industrial character. They are grouped also according to administration; and, as samples of the classification, lists of selected unions are printed for 'individual comparison.'

The Poor Law has, wisely we think, classified its paupers not by age, but by physical conditions as 'able-bodied' and 'not able-bodied.' The aged and infirm have for a long time been classed as 'not able-bodied,' and persons over sixty have usually been placed in that class. The uncertainties of an age count are very generally admitted. In one large town the process

of ascertaining the ages of old applicants was thus described to us.

'Ages can only be taken as quite general. The people often do not know their age. Then the officer tries to fix it. He asks them for instance, "How old were you at the time of the great storm?" Or he asks them about their past life, and how old they thought they were at such and such a time. Sometimes they give their age older than it is, and ask that it may be reduced afterwards, because, for instance, they have given a lower age to the insurance society when they insured for funeral benefit.'

Elsewhere we have also found that it was recognised that, to receive the extra comforts of 'not able-bodied' paupers, there was a tendency to claim the age of sixty prematurely, and there are often discrepancies in the statements of age made at different times. The correctness of the quinquennial divisions of the ages of later life, 65-70, 70-75, is thus very doubtful. It may be said that this affects all old-age returns more or less; and that is true. But when systems of pension-relief are proposed, based upon the fact of having reached a certain age, the question becomes important.

Another criticism affects all Mr. Booth's comparisons in regard to the Metropolis, and his comparisons of individual London unions. In London, especially in central London, there is a constant shift of applicants from one union to another. Hence an accurate year count is very difficult, if not impossible. Of 1,056 persons over sixty-five in receipt of relief in 1892 in St. George-in-the-East, the clerk states that he is certain that at least 300 will be found on the books of other unions in the course of the year. Many apply for and obtain relief, and go away before inquiry can be completed. At the Poplar Workhouse the weekly 'ins' and 'outs' amount to an average of nearly 400. 'Many of these persons, it is well known, go from one workhouse to another, never staying long enough for the law of settlement to touch them.' At Chelsea, among 1,853 cases there were 'a very large number of migratory (aged) poor who were not *bonâ fide* Chelsea residents. There was no casual ward there in 1891-92, and casuals were nightly admitted to the workhouse and discharged the next morning. Over 600 were of this class.' In the Strand, where the numbers seem heavy, if day and year census be compared, there is a constantly shifting population in common lodging-houses, and 'the small resident population is not of a class where old people usually

prevail.' At St. Pancras the returns are affected by the large number of non-resident applications made by persons who arrive by the great railways that have their termini in that union. And in other unions also, St. Olave's, St. Saviour's, St. George's Hanover Square (which includes Westminster), and indeed generally in the central parts of London, where the number of applications from common lodging-houses is large, there is every probability of considerable duplication in the returns as between union and union. Identification too was often difficult or impossible, in spite of the greatest care. One clerk writes that 'with the multiplicity of cases dealt with it was quite impossible to identify with any accuracy those admitted during the year, and there is no doubt that in compiling the necessary figures, to arrive at a summary, many persons may, under such circumstances, have been entered more than once.' The returns, another writes, can only be regarded as 'approximately correct': 'the danger of duplication was great.' A result such as that of the year count at St. Saviour's, which gives the percentage of persons over sixty-five in that union as 6,479, or 906 per thousand,¹ is, we think we may say, certainly wrong. Mr. Booth, we are sorry to say, accepts this figure (p. 420), and lays stress on it more than once. We have said enough, we think, to show that all his comparative statements of year pauperism as to London and London unions must be considered untrustworthy.² There is a similar cause of disturbance in the annual returns in the case of vagrants who are admitted to workhouses, especially in the larger urban unions. Thus, for instance, of 962 tramps admitted to the Manchester Workhouse in 1893, 171 said they came from Rochdale, 93 from Bolton, and so on; and a tramp who is admitted to one workhouse is likely to be admitted to another, and very probably several others in the course of the year. Special instances might be quoted, but this, though a source of error, would not probably affect the returns in the country generally to any large extent.

These and some other considerations suggest that the day count is a more precise index of pauperism than the year count. And it is also a fairer test. Many of those who received relief, have within the year ceased to be paupers. The year's count includes therefore not paupers only, but ex-paupers also. On the other hand, almost all those who are in receipt of allowances, usually revised only at comparatively long intervals,

¹ Or rather less, if allowance be made for the infirmary at Camberwell.

² See pp. 21, 24, 33, &c.

would be included in the day count, and therefore the day count represents the standing pauperism of the country, *plus* what may be taken as an average of its intermittent and casual pauperism. The year's count, on the other hand, appraises this casual pauperism as of equal weight with the permanent pauperism, and thus represents the total pauperism of the country in an exaggerated form.

For the country, London excepted, the return may be taken as fairly accurate, in spite of some instances of miscount that have come to light, for naturally it is more difficult to make the census of a day than of a year. And special causes—for instance, influenza during the winter of 1891-2—have sometimes swelled the return. One additional disadvantage of the year's count is that, as it has only been made once, namely in 1891-2, its figures cannot be compared with those of any other year. Hence one of the limitations of Mr. Booth's book, which is based almost entirely on the figures of that one year.

II.

Next we have to turn to the methods adopted for drawing conclusions from this evidence, which we accept subject to the reservations that we have mentioned.

Of the statistical data the groups of 'Individual Comparisons' are samples. The first group deals with unions 'rural or mostly rural—agriculture.' These are arranged according to the amount of their *annual* pauperism in 1891-2; and the percentage of money spent in outdoor relief as compared with the total spent in relief in that year is entered against each union. This suggests that the proportion given in outdoor relief may be a cause of the pauperism. And the argument of the tables is to challenge the opinion hitherto adopted by many, which may be summed up as follows: outdoor relief is more attractive than indoor relief; a decrease of pauperism is usually promoted by a decrease in outdoor relief; a decrease of outdoor relief is often accompanied by an increase in indoor relief, but to such an amount as to be practically insignificant when compared with the general decrease in pauperism due to the adoption of this policy. It is for the reader to try this cause. Mr. Booth's general conclusion (p. 29) is that it is proven that 'the numbers in receipt of indoor relief are very much increased when outdoor relief is not given,' and that 'a decrease in out relief is almost balanced by an actual increase in indoor relief.' Or, to repeat the same

conclusion in another form, 'the proportion of the old relieved is on the whole [p. 421] no more where assistance is principally given in the form of outdoor relief, than where comparatively little is distributed in this particular manner.' The groups of 'individual comparisons' which indicate the material out of which the tables for areas larger than the union are compiled, enable the reader to ascertain how far the facts in individual cases support this view, and contradict the earlier view that we have quoted. And if the case is proved in the series of individual instances, it is proved in the larger combinations of unions which find their place in the 'General Conclusions': on the other hand, if it is not so proved, these combinations are faulty, and the 'general conclusions' are fallacious.

We may divide our criticisms into two parts. The 'individual comparisons' cannot be conclusive, we may argue, because the tables themselves do not contain, and, based on a single year, cannot furnish, conclusive data. And next we may say that they are not only insufficient, but misleading. To enforce these criticisms we should wish to compare the past and present of a union, or to compare it with other unions. Mr. Booth's figures do not enable us to do either of these things. As the tables are not historical, they do not allow of any comparison of past and present—a condition essential to the formation of a correct conclusion. Thus, for instance, the effect of increasing population in reducing the percentages of pauperism is entirely overlooked, and unions are credited with a low pauperism to which on administrative grounds they are in no way entitled. The percentages of money spent on outdoor relief out of total relief are also, without a knowledge of the past, of little real service. Two plans are preferable, and usually adopted—either to state the number of indoor and outdoor paupers, and to take a percentage of each class and of the total on the population. This is the plan now adopted in Mr. Pell's returns. Or, instead of money spent on outdoor relief, to take the percentage of *persons* who receive outdoor relief, giving at the same time the totals of each class and of the whole. By these methods, stated historically, we can compare a union with itself. In these tables this plan of comparison cannot be applied.

Failing this plan there is another—to group the Unions and compare them in groups—but for that too the tables are wanting. Unions cannot be compared with one another unless some system be adopted by which differences in the number, sex, or age of

the population be 'standardised' for purposes of comparison. This is neither done nor attempted. This, the real difficulty of the problem, is ignored. Yet, if our objection on this score be well grounded, the inutility of almost all the tables of comparison in the book must be admitted.

We will consider then the lists of 'individual comparisons,' first from the point of view of comparing the union with itself.

To begin with, the lists are inconclusive. This is admitted. On Group XVIII., 'provincial urban,' the author writes: 'The highest rate is 8·9 per cent. at Chichester: the lowest, 3·7 per cent., at Medway. It is as difficult in this group as elsewhere to connect in any consecutive fashion the facts stated.' And on Group XVI., 'mostly rural or semi-urban residential,' he says: 'Both these districts (West Derby and Richmond) have reformed their administration: in the one outdoor relief is over 33, and in the other 22 per cent.; and if we compare Fylde, in Lancashire, with Richmond, we find an equally satisfactory result as to pauperism generally, with an altogether different policy of administration. On the whole, in this group, out relief does not prevail to any great extent, but it is not easy to trace any connection between a smaller proportion of out relief and a lower rate of pauperism on the whole.' We shall return to Fylde, etc., later on. As we shall show, it is impossible from these data to trace anything at all, and certainly not the true bearing and effect of a policy of administration.

But the method is also misleading. In Group I. Stockbridge heads the list, Brixworth closes it. Surprise is expressed that Stockbridge, 'which lays claim to a policy of restriction,' should not produce results more equivalent to those at Brixworth. On the contrary, it figures as a pauperised union, though 'it does not give much outdoor relief.' 'There is,' it is said, 'a difference in policy between it and Brixworth, but the difference is not so strongly marked. In density the population does not vary much, and there are more old people, especially old women, in Brixworth than in Stockbridge.' Finally, to take rateable value as a test, Brixworth is much the richer, but has, nevertheless, a large proportion of its people living under conditions of crowding: altogether it is quite a conundrum.

If we put aside the relative conditions of crowding and rateable value, the effect of which on the pauperism of country unions is at present a matter of extreme uncertainty, we may take the remaining figures as a test. They are as follows—and if the

administration is not very different in the two unions, yet the result seems on the face of it very dissimilar :—

Per cent. pauperism in old age, 12 months' count.	Union.	County.	Population.	Per cent. of pauperism 12 months.	Administra- tion.	Per cent. out relief to in and out.
29.0 8.0	Stockbridge Brixworth	Hants Northamptonshire	6,601 12,186	12.7 1.3	B. C. D.	40.0 26.0
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This is the statement for 1892.

Against it let us set an historical statement :—¹

Union.	Per cent. pauperism 12 months 1891-2.	Per cent. old age pauperism 1891-2.	Per cent. pauperism on population, 1861.	Per cent. pauperism on population, 1891.	Per cent. of decrease or increase total relief 1861 and 1891.	Per cent. decrease or increase indoor relief 1861 and 1891.	Per cent. decrease or increase outdoor relief 1861 and 1891.	Per cent. medical relief on total relief year 1891-2.
Stockbridge Brixworth	12.7 1.3	29.0 8.0	5.9 6.6	4.7 0.8	-27 -90	-7 -30	-31 -96	58 0
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

These figures are conclusive, and are supported by the figures in the next table also. The question is clear enough when a completer statement is submitted. Both Stockbridge and Brixworth were pauperised unions in 1861, Brixworth the more so. They may therefore be fairly compared so far. Stockbridge has no doubt reduced its out-relief list. The decrease amounts to 31 per cent. between 1861 and 1891, and the percentage of out to total applicants was 84 in 1861, 80 in 1891, which was about the average of recent years, and 56 in 1892. But in Brixworth the decrease amounts to 96 per cent., and the corresponding percentages in 1861 and 1891 of out-applicants to total applicants were 89 and 31, showing a larger original out-relief list and a much greater decrease. Stockbridge pauperism also has increased since 1881 from 3.3 to 4.7 per cent. on population. This corresponds with a fall at Brixworth of 2.5 to .8. Lastly, half the number of those relieved in Stockbridge in 1891-92 received medical relief only. No one was so relieved at Brixworth. The people provided it for themselves. These further facts throw light on the policy and explain the apparent discrepancies suggested by Mr. Booth, which are heightened by the interposition in his table

¹ Columns 2 and 3 are taken from Mr. Booth's book. Column 9 from Mr. Ritchie's return. Columns 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 from 1st January 'B' returns.

of a variety of unions between Stockbridge at the top and Brixworth at the bottom, in which, as we shall see, the most diverse local and other conditions have prevailed in the last forty years. The history of the question explains the paradox.

But in further support of the necessity of dealing with statistics of pauperism on this method, we quote figures relating to eight unions, taken from the top, bottom, and middle of Mr. Booth's first list.

Eight Unions from Group I. (Mr. BOOTH) arranged according to actual decrease of Pauperism.

Unions.	Mr. Booth's order.	Population 1861.	Population 1891.	Pauperism on population, 1861.	Pauperism on population, 1891.	Per cent. decrease in pauperism, 1861-91.			Per cent. of decrease in not able-bodied pauperism on population over 60.		Year 1891-92.			Per cent. pauperism on population half-year, 1891-92.
						Total.	Out.	In.	1861.	1891.	Per cent. old age pauperism, 65.	Per cent. pauperism, 12 months.	Per cent. persons receiving medical relief.	
1. Pewsey, Wilts	2	12,466	11,713	6.3	5.4	20	20	16	31.2	25.1	39	12.5	44	8.5
2. Bampton, Cumberland.....	5	10,866	9,754	3.0	2.4	26	25	30	17.0	15.1	22	4.3	10	4.3
3. Stockbridge, Hants.....	1	7,286	6,601	5.9	4.7	27	31	7	35.6	18.6	29	12.7	58	4.1
4. Skirlaugh, E. Riding	6	9,654	9,304	3.9	2.5	36	38	26	23.2	17.4	22	3.2	0	4.0
5. Mildenhall, Suffolk.....	3	9,595	8,559	7.8	4.7	46	46	38	40.4	23.2	52	12.0	5	8.0
6. Thakeham, Suffolk	4	7,567	8,049	7.4	3.0	56	66	3	35.9	18.3	27	4.9	3	5.8
7. Lunesdale, Lancashire.....	7	6,978	7,347	3.6	1.0	69	72	53	18.3	6.6	10	1.8	0	2.1
		(1871)		(1871)					(1871)					
8. Brixworth, Northamptonshire	8	15,359	12,186	6.6	.8	90	96	35	35.9	4.7	8	1.3	0	3.1

From this table we see how different is the result when the past history of a union is taken into account. These unions are arranged according to decrease of pauperism (col. 7); and, if that be a fair test, their relative position is quite different from that in the text (col. 2). Bampton, for instance, is second, not fifth. Its old age pauperism is not now much less than that of several other unions (*cf* Cols. 10, 11, and 12), but it had a better start with a population averse to being pauperised. It had no heritage of pauperism. Thirty and forty years ago, when Brixworth and Mildenhall had 6 and 7 per cent., it had only 3. Some people don't care for and refuse the half-crown of out relief. Some will grab it, if you offer it. The North-country folk and the Cornish, owing to

¹ In this table the figures in Columns 10 and 11 are based on the hypothesis that the 'not able-bodied' pauperism does not vary greatly from the pauperism over 60 years of age. This is concluded from a comparison of what is called Mr. Burt's return, which gives the number of paupers over 60, 1st August, 1890, with the number of not able-bodied paupers 1st July, 1890. It thus appears that the latter include about 81 per cent. of persons over 60: and the percentage holds pretty closely when the proportion is taken on the counties. In taking this proportion some points of detail have to be considered, but these I need not perhaps enlarge upon here..

better wages and other social conditions, had at the beginning of the century avoided or withstood this temptation—if it came to them. The south and east of the country had fallen into it. Hence in each place the results differ. But, if such conditions be overlooked, credit for reform is not given to good administration—*e.g.*, as at Lunesdale and Brixworth, where in the one case a union but little pauperised at any time has greatly reduced its pauperism, and in the other a badly pauperised union has made astonishing progress. And further, if we compare Columns 8 and 7, we shall see that to the extent to which there has been decrease in out relief there has also been decrease in total pauperism—just the reverse of what Mr. Booth argues—and that irrespective of county and character of population. And if we compare Columns 15 and 13 we shall see that the unions which give least outdoor relief have actually fewer paupers in the year 1891–92 than they had in six months of 1880–81. Therefore the diminution of out relief does not, as we are told, increase occasional pauperism; but we notice that large out relief goes with much medical relief. These points I have argued from only these eight unions, taken at haphazard as a sample, but they can be proven from larger groups of unions as well, or rather better. And further, as we have said, the better comparison on this method is that of the union with itself. This the above table enables us to make. In Mr. Booth's book it is nowhere possible.¹

To show the force of our second objection, that there must be some equalisation of population, age, and sex if a comparison between unions or groups of unions is to be made, we turn to Group XV., which consists of 'mostly urban, or semi-urban, manufacture.' We have worked out the figures of eight in this group, and what we have said in regard to Group I. applies equally to these. Without the statistical history of the unions, the entries have practically no meaning. But here we only deal with population; and we have not entered males and females separately—lest our table should be too large.

Column 2 shows how large in some of these unions is the increase of population at the reproductive ages. Wellington

¹ It may be mentioned that in some instances the percentages of outdoor to total paupers are taken on very small numbers. At Lunesdale there are only 15 paupers in the workhouse out of 78; at Brixworth, 50 out of 100. With such numbers a couple of families might alter the whole proportion. There is the same difficulty, if the percentage be taken on money spent on out relief to total relief, with the added objection that the more inadequate the out relief the less will the proportion of out relief to total relief appear to be; and an out relief union may seem much 'stricter' than it really is.

As is the ratio per thousand of the mean of a decade of recorded pauperism to the population in the smaller area (*e.g.* the union) to the ratio per thousand of the mean of a decade of recorded pauperism to the population in the larger area (*e.g.* the union—county, or the selected group of agricultural or industrial unions), so is the ratio per thousand of the recorded paupers to population on (say) January 1st of a particular year in the smaller area to x —a rate of pauperism for the larger area adjusted to the conditions of the smaller.¹

III.

We now turn to a method of comparison by administration which has been adopted in this book. Unions were asked what their policy was—A, B, C, or D; that is—

A. Out relief given, subject to good behaviour, not only in cases of actual destitution, but with a view of assisting the old who are in a state of poverty.

B. Out relief given, subject (1) to good character, (2) actual destitution, and (3) contributions from relatives legally liable; but without pressure on other relatives and without entering into the question of adequate maintenance being assured.

C. Out relief given subject to:—

- (1) Good character.
- (2) Actual destitution.
- (3) Full contribution from relatives legally liable.
- (4) Full contribution from relatives not legally liable.
- (5) Proof that maintenance is secured.

D. Practical refusal of outdoor relief.

Of these policies blends are also described, A B, B C, C D. A policy should be judged by its fruits: does this method of comparison show us what really are the fruits of distinct policies of administration, and thus enable us to judge of their value? The following table gives us a negative answer. In this inquiry, and indeed throughout, one cannot do better than take Mr. Pell's returns, which start from 1851, and compare past and present; but here we take only his last return, that published in 1892

¹ See p. 17, 'The Statistics of Metropolitan Pauperism,' a paper read by Mr. C. S. Loch, Secretary to the London Charity Organisation Society, at a Special Meeting of the Council, May 21, 1894, *Charity Organisation Review*, July 1894. Arrangements are in progress for the publication of a History of the Poor Law in this century, with statistical tables which may include a comparative statement of the pauperism of childhood, of the able-bodied, and of the aged by unions, counties, and in other groups.

(No. 266). If we went further back the policy could of course be more accurately tested, as we have already shown.

Policies of Administration (Groups I. and II.).

Union.	From Mr. Pell's return, 1891.			Out relief to total (Mr. Booth).
	Indoor on Population.	Outdoor on Population.	Total pauperism on Population.	
A.—				
Freebridge Lynn, Norfolk ...	0·4	4·1	4·5	85·0
Flegg, Norfolk	0·7	3·3	4·0	68·0
Hambledon, Surrey	0·9	2·6	3·5	57·0
A B.—				
Dunmow, Essex... ..	1·1	3·7	4·8	60·0
Warminster, Wilts	0·5	4·6	5·1	84·0
Wincanton, Somerset	0·8	4·9	5·7	74·0
North Witchford, Cambridge ...	0·8	2·6	3·4	64·0
Cranbrook, Kent	0·8	2·7	3·5	57·0
Sturminster, Dorset	0·6	4·3	4·9	74·0
B.—				
Lutterworth, Leicester	0·3	2·7	3·0	82·0
Settle, W. Riding	0·3	1·0	1·3	61·0
Leyburn, N. Riding	0·4	1·8	2·2	70·0
Bootle, Cumberland	0·5	1·4	1·9	56·0
Linton, Cambridge	0·9	6·2	7·1	84·0
Cosford, Suffolk	1·0	4·4	5·4	68·0
B C.—				
Stockbridge, Hants	1·1	4·1	5·2	46·0
Tisbury, Wilts	1·0	4·2	5·2	63·0
Tenbury, Worcester	0·8	2·0	2·8	52·0
C.—				
Ongar, Essex	1·2	3·4	4·6	44·
Cricklade, Wilts	0·7	3·2	3·9	71·
D.—				
Brixworth, Northampton ...	0·8	0·5	1·3	26·0
Bradfield, Berks	0·7	0·4	1·1	18·0

Tested by such a table, the classification by administration seems hardly serious. In fact, the unions, without regard to any common standard, or to any economic or historical considerations, have arbitrarily grouped themselves as A's or B's, &c. The result is mere confusion. Every form of administration produces every kind of result—with the exception of D, where there has been, as every one knows, a declared policy. Probably, without any departure from the truth, the A B's might as well have called themselves A's, or B's, or B C's. It is easy from such a chaos to argue that administration has but little effect on pauperism. The classification means nothing, and nothing but inconclusiveness can be drawn from it. But of course it is particularly unfortunate that the inconclusive conclusion should

take the form of an argument that every kind of administration answers somewhere. Those who wish to justify a happy-go-lucky administration can find no better friend than Mr. Booth. Does he not tell them that D, the hateful strictness of a non-outdoor relief policy, produces only a 1·3 or 1·1 per cent. of pauperism on population, and that they may have the same with a B policy, while A is passably good—quite as good as A B? Unfortunately his readers will be deceived. No clue is placed in their hands. When the history of the union and other points are considered, such arguments fall to the ground.

The lists and remarks in the chapter 'General Results,' in which the conclusions from the 'individual comparisons' are gathered together, are of a similar character and simply uninforming. We are told that 'the essential and remarkable feature of these figures is the extraordinary difference that exists, without, as it seems, any sufficient reason, in the extent of pauperism under similar conditions!' And of course the variations in the proportion of in and out relief and in the percentages of pauperism for a single year taken from a number of miscellaneous unions are truly wonderful. But if it is considered that a low percentage of present pauperism is often due (1) to higher wages in the past and present combined with an indisposition to become pauperised, as in Cornwall, Lancaster, and other counties, that have always shown a low pauperism; and (2) to a diminution of outdoor relief, especially when there has been a declared policy of reduction, or (3) in part to mere increase of population, there is no great puzzle in the matter. In this light let us take, for instance, Mr. Booth's first table of nineteen unions (p. 101), and see whether the differences between them are so extraordinary. The following statement gives their position historically, and, as will be seen, it fully confirms the three points just mentioned.

Unions.	Year.	Popula- tion.	Paupers. ¹		Total.	Percentage of 'out' to total paupers.	Percentage of total paupers to total population.
			In.	Out.			
1. Fylde.	1861	25,682	86	634	720	88·0	2·8
	1871	30,626	130	670	800	83·7	2·6
	1881	40,910	155	363	518	70·0	1·2
	1891	56,317	128	408	536	76·1	·9
2. Richmond (Surrey).	1861	18,802	163	509	672	75·7	3·5
	1871	26,145	249	562	811	69·2	3·1
	1881	33,633	247	274	521	52·5	1·5
	1891	41,548	324	221	545	40·5	1·3

¹ Less lunatics and vagrants.

Unions.	Year.	Popula- tion.	Paupers ¹		Total.	Percentage of 'out to total paupers.	Percentage of total paupers to total population.
			In.	Out.			
3. Wharfedale.	1861	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1871	39,142	43	646	689	93·7	1·7
	1881	46,705	78	681	759	89·7	1·6
	1891	51,256	63	515	578	89·1	1·1
4. Haslingden.	1861	69,781	86	711	797	89·2	1·1
	1871	79,956	143	516	659	78·3	·8
	1881	95,293	206	983	1,189	82·6	1·2
	1891	103,408	172	635	807	78·6	·7
5. Preston.	1861	110,523	589	2,752	3,341	82·3	3·0
	1871	115,846	730	1,348	2,078	64·8	1·7
	1881	129,160	779	620	1,399	44·3	1·0
	1891	143,541	610	546	1,156	47·2	·8
6. Wirrall.	1861	18,420	160	3,369	3,529	95·4	19·1
	1871	23,419	97	538	635	84·7	2·7
	1881	27,928	93	421	514	81·9	1·8
	1891	39,623	109	346	455	76·0	1·1
7. Reigate.	1861	20,109	172	735	907	81·0	4·5
	1871	27,303	198	711	909	78·2	3·3
	1881	30,359	186	307	493	62·2	1·6
	1891	36,580	158	331	489	67·6	1·3
8. Atcham, ² Shrewsbury.	1861	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1871	45,565	138	129	267	48·3	·5
	1881	48,633	373	88	461	19·0	·9
	1891	48,346	359	70	429	16·3	·8
9. Penzance.	1861	54,554	129	704	833	84·5	1·5
	1871	54,160	193	1,441	1,634	88·1	3·0
	1881	50,311	122	1,122	1,244	90·1	2·4
	1891	48,276	81	861	942	91·4	1·9
10. Lancaster.	1861	35,297	68	907	975	93·0	2·7
	1871	32,661	110	786	896	87·7	2·7
	1881	40,838	87	315	402	78·3	·9
	1891	52,024	151	296	447	66·2	·8
11. West Ward.	1861	8,072	37	248	285	87·0	3·5
	1871	8,248	28	213	241	88·3	2·9
	1881	8,225	22	133	155	85·8	1·8
	1891	7,709	20	125	145	86·2	1·8
12. Church Stretton.	1861	6,289	40	335	375	89·3	5·9
	1871	6,343	61	170	231	73·5	3·6
	1881	5,672	68	106	174	60·9	3·0
	1891	5,401	66	96	162	59·2	2·9
13. Tregaron.	1861	10,737	No Workhouse	561	561	—	5·2
	1871	10,677	”	670	670	—	6·2
	1881	10,272	10	309	319	96·8	3·1
	1891	8,613	23	180	203	88·6	2·3
14. Cleobury Mortimer.	1861	8,304	56	407	463	87·9	5·5
	1871	8,317	86	326	412	79·1	4·9
	1881	8,138	43	85	128	66·4	1·5
	1891	8,163	47	60	107	56·0	1·3

¹ Less lunatics and vagrants.² Atcham Union now includes Shrewsbury.

Unions.	Year.	Popula- tion.	Paupers. ¹		Total.	Percentage of 'out' to total paupers.	Percentage of total paupers to total population.
			In.	Out.			
15. Rothbury.	1861	7,147	15	394	409	96·3	5·7
	1871	7,081	15	203	218	93·1	3·0
	1881	6,709	13	114	127	89·7	1·8
	1891	6,083	9	77	86	89·5	1·4
16. Garstang.	1861	12,425	50	525	575	91·3	4·6
	1871	12,186	29	313	342	91·5	2·8
	1881	12,375	17	221	238	92·8	1·9
	1891	12,151	13	139	152	91·4	1·2
17. Lunesdale.	1861	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1871	6,978	32	226	258	87·5	3·6
	1881	7,132	30	91	121	75·2	1·6
	1891	7,347	15	63	78	80·7	1·0
18. Bradfield.	1861	15,771	159	956	1,115	85·7	7·0
	1871	15,853	238	999	1,237	80·7	7·8
	1881	17,972	145	202	347	58·2	1·9
	1891	18,017	113	29	142	20·4	·7
19. Brixworth.	1861	15,359	107	912	1,019	89·4	6·6
	1871	13,866	91	1,099	1,190	92·3	8·5
	1881	13,336	69	270	339	79·6	2·5
	1891	12,186	69	31	100	31·0	·8

The other puzzles in this chapter have only to be similarly treated, and they will no longer be insoluble, especially with added local knowledge. Of course, with material used as Mr. Booth has used his, 'it must come about that, however the unions are grouped, no policy stands out as on an average definitely superior to the others as regards the old,' and equally will it seem (p. 423) that there are 'remarkable instances of successful administration,' on 'B' lines, with any proportion of out relief from over 80 to under 7 per cent.

IV.

Two other important questions of method remain. We are told (p. 423):—

'There are no statistics to show whether pauperism in old age has increased or decreased, but the figures of total pauperism show general improvement between 1881 and 1891 everywhere except in London.'

This is to take for granted that the decrease in 'not able-bodied' pauperism does not imply a decrease in old age pauperism; as all the aged and infirm are classed not able-bodied, it can

¹ Less lunatics and vagrants.

hardly be that a decrease in the latter does not involve a decrease in the former.

The figures for not able-bodied pauperism per thousand of total population are as follows.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
1858.....	10·3	22·4	16·5
1872.....	10·0	22·0	16·2
1892.....	5·2	12·3	8·8

But we can put the issue more precisely.

England and Wales : Pauperism 60 Years of Age and Upwards (Day Census).

Year.	Per cent. pauperism all ages on population all ages.	Per cent. all ages to 16 on population to 16.	Per cent. all ages 16—60 on population 16—60.	Per cent. 60— on population 60—.	Per cent. of 60— pauperism as it would have been if old age pauperism had decreased at the same rate as pauperism at the active age of life.
1851	4·5	4·7	1·5	21·5	—
1861	4·2	4·2	1·3	20·8	—
1871	4·5	4·5	1·5	21·5	21·5
1881	2·8	2·7	·7	15·1	13·8
1891	2·4	2·1	·6	13·7	11·4
	1	2	3	4	5

Mr. Booth's book gives us no hint of this great decrease of pauperism at all ages. And it is well to ascertain rather more closely what it suggests. The theory which has hitherto been generally held is, that to reduce child pauperism and able-bodied pauperism is afterwards to reduce old age pauperism. A person sixty-five years of age in 1891 would have been twenty-five years of age in 1851. All the time of his manhood from 1851 to 1871 he would, if we may judge from the returns, have been under much greater stress or temptation to accept poor law relief than after that date, for between 1851 and 1871 the able-bodied pauperism of the country amounted to as much as 6·7 per cent. in the lowest year (1861) and to 10·9 per cent in 1864. It was thus in that period always *larger* than 5·3 per cent., the pauperism which now prevails in the quinquennial period—sixty to sixty-five years of life—if we may make such a comparison. But a person twenty-five years of age in 1861 would have lived a greater part of his working life when able-bodied pauperism was reduced, and would be less likely to have received any poor law relief at that stage, for since 1872 such pauperism has always been less than 6·6 per cent. and generally much under 4

per cent.—always *less*, therefore, than the pauperism of the first five years of old age, sixty to sixty-five. As might reasonably be expected, this change has affected old age pauperism generally. If the younger men keep off the rates, they help to keep off the older men too. We cannot expect that old age pauperism should be reduced at a greater rate than the pauperism of active life. There must be more dependence as the period of greater infirmity and sickness and lessened ability to work comes on. But yet, suppose we adopt this severe test of progress, and ascertain whether pauperism in old age is being reduced at the same rate as pauperism between sixteen and sixty. What is the result? Between 1871 and 1881 (col. 3) the percentage of the latter is half as much as it was: 1·5 becomes ·7; and old age pauperism has decreased more than a fourth. We might have expected on our strict test a further fall of about 2 per cent. And in the same way we may compare 1881 and 1891. Thus, then, if our social past be considered, the facts of old age pauperism are quite as satisfactory as we could expect, and far better than most people imagine.

V.

But it is said that pauperism increases with age, and some very ‘telling’ figures are quoted in support of pension schemes, universal or other. One such statement of figures is as follows: ¹

Ages.	Population (1891)	Paupers.	Percentage.
All ages	29,002,525	658,552 ²	2·2
60—65	772,879	41,180 ³	5·3
65—70	571,948	62,240 ³	10·8
70—75	417,914	77,708 ³	18·5
75—80	283,333	60,879 ³	26·0
80—	149,407	44,860 ³	30·0
60—	2,145,481	286,867	13·3
1	2	3	4

On figures similar to these, but based on the year’s count, Mr. Booth remarks: ‘We can say without doubt that while only 5 per cent. of the population are paupers, taking all ages together, and not half of that proportion, taking the active years of life alone, the rate is about 10 per cent. between sixty and sixty-five, 20 per

¹ A version of this statement, worked out on an estimate to a year’s count of old age pauperism in quinquennial periods, will be found in Appendix B of Mr. Booth’s book. See also pp. 42, 420, &c.

² B return, 1st July 1890.

³ Burt’s return, 1st August, 1890.

cent. between sixty-five and seventy, 30 per cent. between seventy and seventy-four, and 40 per cent. over sixty-five.' But the reader should be cautioned as to the conclusion that he draws from this sentence. If we refer to our table (col. 3), we see that the *pauperism* of persons over sixty forms about 56 per cent. of the pauperism of the country, while (col. 2) the *population* of persons over sixty forms only about 8 per cent. of the population of the country. Hence we have a contrast drawn between pauperism, when it is necessarily at its maximum—in the inactive period of life—and population, when it is necessarily at its minimum—in the period of greatest mortality. And the same remark applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the several quinquennial periods. Obviously such percentages of pauperism on population must seem heavy, when compared with a percentage of the total pauperism on the total population of the country or with a percentage of pauperism on population before the age of sixty. And if this great difference between the numbers of the population in the two contrasted periods—before and after sixty—is overlooked, the statement must produce in the mind of the reader an exaggerated and misleading impression. We naturally ask what amount of pauperism, in addition to that experienced at the active age of life, ought we to expect to find in the inactive? To this no kind of answer is given. And yet, without doubt, the settlement of some standard would show how far the rates of pauperism after sixty were really excessive. We have suggested a standard, the percentage that might be expected if old age pauperism decreased at the same rate as able-bodied pauperism. If this were adopted—and it seems fair—the picture is far less gloomy than that which Mr. Booth's statistical precipice of old age pauperism suggests to our imagination. Is Mr. Booth right then in urging that 'the very serious character of these statistics is evident, and fully justifies the public feeling on the matter which resulted in the appointment of the Royal Commission?' Is it not possible to believe that if the true statistics had been fairly put before the public, with due regard to the decrease of old age pauperism and the conditions which make it inevitable that old age pauperism should considerably exceed the pauperism of the active age, public feeling, instead of being roused by partial and inaccurate statements, would have been content to work now, as it has done in the past, soberly and steadily towards a better state of things?

VI.

We turn finally to Mr. Booth's larger groups. We cannot reanalyse the industrial divisions: but we have worked out his geographical divisions on the comparative method for a pauperism over sixty years of age, subject to the conditions mentioned above. We set our figures against his for the year's pauperism over 65, taken from the table on his p. 15.

We may conclude then: As to evidence, Mr. Booth's deductions are drawn from the Return for 1891-2, on which he almost entirely builds his case, and they are plainly faulty so far as the Metropolis as a whole is concerned, and several of its central unions. On the other hand, a large mass of valuable evidence contained in the ordinary returns of pauperism has been ignored, and, if used,

Proportion of the Old in Receipt of Relief according to Geographical Divisions (omitting London).

	Per cent. ¹ pauperism on popula- tion over 65 year 1891-2.	Per cent. pauperism on population over 60 January 1.				
		1851.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.
North	23	21	19·5	20·2	14·8	13·0
Midland	29½	24·9	23·8	24·3	18·1	16·8
South and South Western	29	26·8	29·7	30·1	20·7	18·2
East	32	34·3	32·3	32·0	20·6	19·7
West and Wales	30	32·1	31·4	31·5	22·5	19·9
Metropolis	—	—	20·3	25·7	18·7	18·3

it would have entirely altered the presentation of his case. Next, the methods which have been adopted cannot be called other than arbitrary. Unions are compared without any regard to their history, and without any attempt to obtain a standard of comparison by which differences in the distribution of population would have been equalised. All the tables must thus be set aside as of very partial value. Mr. Booth in his preface states that 'he does not seek to do more than suggest the way in which conclusions may be reached.' Alas! in this, and, it follows, in his conclusions, he fails—it seems to us—entirely. How far his statements may mislead cannot be ascertained until the work of calculation has been done over again on some comparative system. It is a matter for sincere regret that at the present time, when the whole administration of our poor law is under discussion, statistical tables so elaborate and yet so incorrect in their conclusions, and so insufficient, should have been published under Mr. Booth's name and auspices.

C. S. LOCH

¹ Mr. Booth's figures.